

Canadian Caribou 5303 in a whadi (dry river bed) near St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, 1965. Mount Sinai is in the background. This aircraft was part of 115 ATU (El Arish) at the time.

Photo courtesy of Gord Jenkins

RCAF and the UN from 1950 to 1980

By Gord Jenkins
& Bruce Gall

This is a first of a planned series of Flightlines articles on these foreign peacekeeping, training, and humanitarian commitments by the RCAF and the integrated Canadian Forces Air Element during the Cold War. This article provides a general introduction to the series.

The Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum's extensive collection includes a Canadair CL-13 Sabre, an Avro Canada CF-

devil – a mini tiny tornado caused by heat on sand that scurried across the desert – in 1966.

Both are buried in the Gaza Commonwealth War Cemetery (this was before Canadian Forces repatriated their dead to Canada).

In 1963, some 115 ATU personnel found themselves on their way to Yemen as part of the United Nations Yemen Observation Mission (UNYOM). This mission lasted from June 1963 to September 1964.

**The RCAF
and Canadian
Forces Air
Element
contributed to
UN and related
operations**

The RCAF contingent, eventually 134 Air Transport Unit (134 ATU), flew Caribou and Otter out of Sanaa, Najran, and Jizan. Similar contingents.

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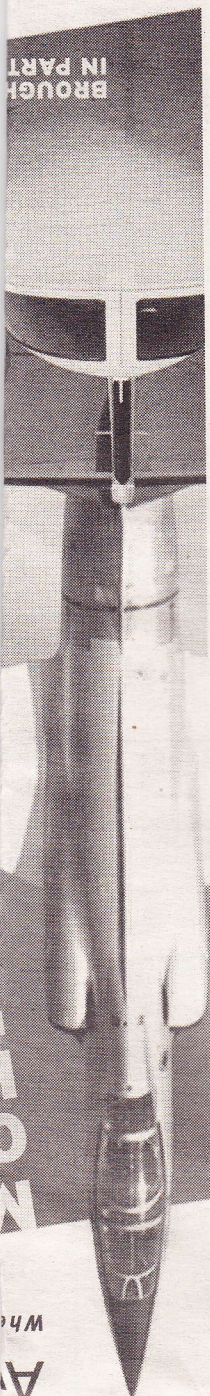
The fact that ou consistently been erating budget for years alone has \$4M per year wi funding, is remark

One might ask this in the midst of landscape which h Canadian econor months. The ans demonstrated ab proven performan staff, and financial

Overall it is th teamwork that ha plane Heritage Mu dustry leader in restoration, and m lection of flying Canada; a centre first class retailer accomplished and ing entity; and th

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Caribou and Otter, ended up serving in West New Guinea (UNTEA) and in India/Pakistan (UNMOGIP and UNIPOM). RCAF Caribou 5324 was destroyed on the ground in Srinagar, India during a strafing attack by a Pakistani Air Force Sabre in 1965 – thankfully there were no casualties among the Canadian personnel.

An important link to North America for many of these units and other foreign commitments, were RCAF Flying Box Car, Yukon, North Star, and Hercules aircraft. For example, No. 426 (T) Squadron North Star aircraft provided airlift into the Congo as part of the Canadian commitment to the ONUC/UNOC peacekeeping mission.

Not all of these foreign commitments were part of United Nations peacekeeping missions. From 1965 to 1970, an RCAF contingent with the Canadian Armed Forces Advisory Training Team Tanzania (CAFATT) trained Tanzanians on Caribou and Otter aircraft.

Whatever the purpose or location, these missions were not without danger and involved long separations from family, often in hostile conditions without the comforts of home. Future articles in this series will look at various missions in more detail including aircraft that were in situation or supplied, the bases they set up in these varied locations and personal anecdotes.

The next article will focus on 115 ATU based in El Arish from 1957 to 1967. Please visit our new web site at www.115atu.com to see additional information, contact the authors, or provide personal stories and photographs to this project.

These air-
CF-104 Starfighters. These air-
craft types all served with the
No. 1 Air Division, or later with
No. 1 Canadian Air Group
(1CAG), as part of Canada's
commitment to NATO.

But these fast movers were
not the only foreign commit-
ments by the RCAF and the inte-
grated Canadian Forces Air
Element during the Cold War.

While these aircraft were tear-
ing up the skies over France and
Germany, yeoman service was
being provided by more stately
Caribou, Otter, and other aircraft
stationed in far flung locations
such as Gaza, Yemen, Indonesia
and other locations on United
Nations peacekeeping missions.

One of the earliest, and
longest lasting, of these foreign
assignments was undertaken by
115 Communications Flight, later
115 Air Transport Unit (115
ATU) eventually based in El
Arish from March 1957 to May
1967. El Arish is about halfway
between the City of Gaza and the
Suez Canal. The living area was
very close to the Mediterranean
Sea while the airfield was about
seven miles inland.

At various times, 115 ATU op-
erated Douglas DC-3 (CC-129)
Dakota, de Havilland (CC-108)
Caribou, and de Havilland DHC-
3 (CC-123) Otter aircraft. These
aircraft were used to ferry sup-
plies and personnel to various
United Nations Emergency Force
(UNEF) outposts and bases such
as Ras El Nab, El Kuntilla, and
Sharm El Sheikh.

This assignment was not with-
out its dangers and several per-
sonnel from 115 ATU were killed
fulfilling their peacekeeping
roles. Two of these were pilots
F/O Paul Pickard and F/O
Richard Edwards who were
killed when their Otter hit a sand